

WEEKLY - 524,212
SEP 2 1972

Approved For Release 2004/10/13 : CIA-RDP88-01350R000200300048-9

P. Malloy, Michael T.

CIAU-Laos

CIAU-Drug Traffic

2 - AirAmerica

When the Embarrassed Chuckling Stopped

Our Allies, Opium, and the CIA

By Michael T. Malloy

We were just about to take off from one of the many secret airstrips the Central Intelligence Agency had cut into the mountains of northern Laos, when a tribal soldier hurried up, spoke briefly to an American CIA agent, and threw a big, white canvas bag aboard. I already half knew the answer, but as we buckled our seat belts I asked the agent what was in the bag.

He looked embarrassed. "Opium," he said.

Embarrassment was the strongest emotion that American officialdom showed a decade ago if anyone mentioned the wide-open dope traffic conducted by our allies in Southeast Asia. Narcotics smuggling was more often viewed with amused tolerance as just another Asian peccadillo like corruption, gold smuggling, and night clubs that advertised "Twenty Fresh Girls Just Arrived From Bangkok With Medical Certificates."

White slavery and gold smuggling still rate little more than an embarrassed chuckle at some of our Southeast Asian embassies ("we're here to fight communism, not to play missionary"), but narcotics is something else.

The epidemic of opium-based heroin that struck our armies there in 1970 and the frightening inroads the drug has made among high-school students at home have turned that amusing peccadillo into a deadly menace to our own national well-being.

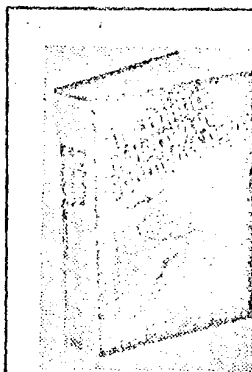
Free Publicity

So *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia* couldn't have been published at a worse time for the men who direct our policies in that bloody and controversial corner of the world. Newspapers, magazines, and television reporters have described allied involvement with the narcotics trade in the past, without generating more than *pro forma* evasions and denials. But this book, published Aug. 17, is so thoroughly researched, so carefully annotated, and so specific in its accusations that even the Central Intelligence Agency has crawled out of its accustomed shell of secrecy to publicly issue 11 pages of denials.

The agency should have stayed in its shell. It guaranteed the book an enormous

Staff Writer Malloy spent several years in Southeast Asia as a correspondent for United Press International.

amount of free publicity by asking Harper & Row to suppress its publication. It trapped itself in a "put up or shut up" corner by telling the publishing company it could demonstrate that author Alfred McCoy's allegations were "totally false." It failed to demonstrate any such thing when Harper & Row broke publishing tradition by giving the agency an advance look at the book and a chance to explode



'The book is so thoroughly researched, so carefully annotated, and so specific in its accusations that even the Central Intelligence Agency has crawled out of its accustomed shell of secrecy to issue 11 pages of denials.'

its charges. Instead of preventing its publication, the president of the 155-year-old publishing house said the CIA's response merely "reaffirmed" his company's confidence in the book.

McCoy is a 27-year-old graduate student at Yale. His book is a monumental piece of scholarship in a field that sometimes resists investigation to the point of killing the investigators. He has interviewed spies, gun runners, opium farmers, mercenaries, policemen, and generals along a trail that ran from dusty European libraries to mountaintops in the no man's land of northern Laos. He produced a fascinating tale of mercenary armies, lost battalions, commando raids on Communist China, and wild mountain tribesmen led by hard-drinking American adventurers who sometimes pay cash bounties for enemy cars. It is right out of *Terry and the Pirates*, and it is all more or less true.

P. McCoy, Alfred

Soc. & Pol. 1008
Heroin in SE Asia

Harper & Row

Orig. under
Malloy

Approved For Release 2004/10/13 : CIA-RDP88-01350R000200300048-9

Continued

American diplomats and secret agents have been involved in the